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**Korean
immigration
to the
United
States:
its demographic
pattern
and social
implications
for both
societies**

Hagen Koo
and Eui-Young Yu



East-West Center
Honolulu, Hawaii

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PREFACE

This paper was prepared while the first author was a Research Fellow at the East-West Population Institute. He is grateful for the research opportunity provided by the Institute. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association in New York, 27–30 August 1980. We would like to thank James T. Fawcett, Chan-Shik Choi, Delos Kelly, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions on the earlier version. We especially appreciate the excellent editing of our manuscript by Sandra Ward, the editor of this Paper Series.

ABSTRACT Drawing on immigration statistics and secondary survey data, this paper attempts to delineate dominant patterns of post-1965 Korean immigration to the United States, to analyze its effects on both societies, and in the process to evaluate the world economic system approach to international migration. Recent Korean immigrants have been characterized by high educational and occupational backgrounds, a high proportion of men and women in their economically and biologically productive ages, an overrepresentation of women and children, a relatively more dispersed settlement pattern upon arrival than other immigrant groups, and concentration in small businesses especially in Black ghettos and other racially mixed areas of major American cities.

Korean immigrants are not, in the main, part of the marginal population that is displaced by the modernization process but are likely to come from the modernized sectors of the society with strong mobility orientation to improve their own and their children's lots. The predominant occupational mobility pattern among Korean immigrants is from professional or white-collar jobs in Korea to small independent businesses in the States. Although they do provide cheap labor for many peripheral industries in America, their more important function for the advanced capitalism, it is argued here, is to fill the gaps and provide flexibility in the labor market rather than directly to provide exploited labor for marginal industries. The role of immigrant labor in the advanced capitalistic economy seems to vary according to the stage and character of the sending economy. Korean emigration causes a serious brain drain problem for Korea; on the other hand, Korean society benefits from emigration through the reduction of population pressure, the receipt of substantial remittances from the emigrants, the return of U.S.-trained professionals, and penetration of the U.S. consumer market through Korean business networks. As the world economic system perspective would suggest, it is argued that Korean migration to the United States cannot be adequately understood on the individual level without looking into the ways in which the two societies are linked within the single world economic system. Whereas world system theorists are concerned primarily with the economic nature of center-periphery relations in the capitalist system and certain imperatives of the monopoly capitalism, this paper stresses the

political and military aspects of such relationships as underlying causes of Korean migration to the United States.

Korean immigration to the United States has come in two waves. The first started in 1903 when 102 laborers arrived in Hawaii to work on the sugar plantations. This immigration flow was cut off in 1905 by the passage of successive anti-Asian immigration legislation in the United States and under pressure of the Japanese government in Korea to curtail further Korean emigration to Hawaii. In this first short period, 7,226 Koreans are known to have arrived in Hawaii; 983 of them later returned to Korea. More Korean immigrants arrived after 1905, primarily as wives of resident immigrants, but they numbered fewer than 2,000.

The second wave of Korean immigration was brought about by changes in U.S. immigration laws in 1965. The 1965 Immigration Act abolished discriminatory quotas based on national origin and eased immigration through family relationships and skilled or professional job qualifications. Such changes produced a sharp increase of immigrants from Asia. The Korean proportion of Asian immigration has gradually risen to the point where Koreans now comprise over one-fifth of all immigrants from Asia. By 1975 they had become the third largest group entering the United States, trailing only Mexicans and Filipinos. The number of Korean immigrants admitted to this country has exceeded 30,000 every year since 1976.

Although these two migratory streams share many common elements, they are different from each other in both the social and economic contexts in which they occurred and the social characteristics and the adaptation patterns of the immigrants. In this paper, we focus primarily on recent Korean immigration to the United States. Our purpose is threefold: (1) to delineate, through the use of existing materials, the dominant patterns of Korean immigration, (2) to analyze its effects on both Korean and American societies, and (3) in the process to evaluate critically the world economic system approach to international migration.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF IMMIGRANTS

Prior to the adoption of the 1965 Immigration Act, immigration from Asian countries had been sharply curtailed by the Immigration Act of

1924 and the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act. Both of these Acts continued the Oriental exclusion policy which had been made explicit in earlier regulations. The specific policy changes introduced in the 1965 Act are discussed in detail elsewhere (Keely, 1971; Boyd, 1974). Of particular relevance to our purpose is the fact that immigration from Asia is now largely determined by the interaction of three factors: (1) the limit of 20,000 visas per country per year (exclusive of visas for spouses, children, or parents of U.S. citizens, (2) the number of relatives already residing in the United States as U.S. citizens or permanent residents, and (3) the skill levels of would-be immigrants (Boyd, 1974). Of course, these factors are relevant only when there are more people in a sending country who want to emigrate than the accepting country wants to admit. In the Republic of Korea, there have always been more than 20,000 people per year waiting for the U.S. visas.

Because of the relatively small number of Koreans in the United States before 1965, Korean immigrants could not use family networks as much as the Chinese or Japanese. Yu (1977) estimated the total number of Koreans in the United States in 1950 at around 17,300. Between 1950 (the year when the Korean War broke out) and 1960, 6,231 Korean immigrants were reportedly admitted to the United States. Most of these were war orphans, students, and Korean brides who had married American soldiers. Between 1961 and 1964, another 7,796 Koreans entered the United States with immigrant visas. Throughout that period, Korean immigrants were primarily women and children; the sex ratio was 29 males to 100 females. It seems clear that their immigration was closely related to the American troops' participation in the Korean War.

The volume and the pattern of Korean immigration began to change drastically after 1965, although the full effect of the new immigration policy did not begin to show until after the transition period that phased in major policy changes ended in 1968. The yearly volume of Korean immigration increased from 2,165 in 1965 to 9,314 in 1970, and again to 30,917 in 1977 (Table 1). The yearly total has probably exceeded 31,000 since 1977 owing to an increase of immigrants exempt from the 20,000 ceiling on visas.

Consequently, the number of Koreans in America has multiplied. It has been estimated that the number of Koreans in the United States was 113,000 in 1970, 290,000 in 1976 (Yu, 1977), and 400,000 as of March 1979 (Yu, 1979a). Assuming an annual natural increase rate of

TABLE 1 Korean and total immigration to the United States: fiscal years 1965–77

Year	Korean	Total	Percentage Korean
1965	2,165	296,697	0.7
1966	2,492	323,040	0.8
1967	3,956	361,972	1.1
1968	3,811	454,448	0.8
1969	6,045	358,579	1.7
1970	9,314	373,326	2.5
1971	14,297	370,478	3.9
1972	18,876	384,685	4.9
1973	22,930	400,063	5.7
1974	28,028	394,861	7.1
1975	28,362	386,194	7.3
1976	30,803	398,615	7.7
1976 (July–September)	6,887	103,676	6.6
1977	30,917	462,315	6.7

SOURCE: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1974 and 1978: table 14).

3 percent and an annual volume of 31,000 immigrants, we can estimate the total number of Koreans in the United States at about 460,000 as of August 1980.

One distinct characteristic of the Korean immigrants to the United States since World War II has been an overrepresentation of women and children. For every 100 females, only 48 males were admitted during 1970, 63 males during 1973, and 64 males during 1977. In the 20–29 age group, the sex ratios (number of males per 100 females) were 23 during 1970, 32 during 1973, and 36 during 1977. Previously, the immigration of Korean women married to American servicemen contributed to the extreme sex imbalance in this age group, but currently this imbalance seems to be caused largely by the immigration of women married to Korean-Americans.

Another immigrant group showing an unusual sex-ratio imbalance is Korean children under age 5 (Table 2). The sex ratio for this group was 67 during 1973 and 64 during 1977. For immigrants from all origins admitted during those two years, the corresponding sex ratios were 97 and 96 respectively. We speculate that two factors may account for this anomaly among the Korean immigrants. One factor is the traditional

TABLE 2 Age distribution and sex ratio of Korean and total immigrants admitted: fiscal years 1973 and 1977

Age group	Age distribution (%)			Sex ratio		
	1973		Total	1977		Total
	Korean	Total		Korean	Total	
0-4	16.6	8.2	17.2	66.6	96.6	63.8
5-9	9.2	8.8	10.1	94.5	102.0	99.5
10-19	13.6	18.9	15.3	77.2	93.0	83.2
20-29	29.4	30.0	28.8	32.0	76.9	36.3
30-39	20.3	16.4	15.2	93.7	100.7	83.2
40-49	5.8	8.1	6.4	108.9	89.3	105.5
50-59	3.1	4.9	3.3	64.0	70.0	72.1
60-69	1.9	3.4	2.8	45.2	68.0	51.9
70-79	0.4	1.2	0.8	35.2	64.8	51.2
80 and over	0.1	0.3	0.1	27.3	59.1	50.0
All age groups	99.9	100.0	100.0	62.9	87.2	64.4
(Number)	(22,930)	(400,063)	(30,917)	(462,315)		

SOURCE: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1974 and 1978: table 9).

Korean preference for sons, which may make the parents more willing to give away their girls for adoption. Another is that American families may prefer girls to boys when adopting Korean children.

Another distinct feature of Korean immigrants is the relatively high proportion of children. Children under age 5 constituted about 17 percent of the total Korean immigrants admitted during 1973, and this percentage remained the same in 1977. In contrast, the corresponding percentage for all immigrant groups was 8 during 1973 and 6 during 1977. For the U.S. population, children under age 5 constituted 7 percent of the population in 1976 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1977: 25). By comparison, children in Korea under age 5 constituted 13.2 percent of the total population in 1975 (1975 Korean Census). The relatively high birth rate of the Korean population, the age structure of the Korean immigrants, and the large number of Korean children adopted by American families all contributed to the high proportion of children among Korean immigrants. Between 1955 and 1974, Holt International Children's Service placed 16,000 Korean orphans in adoptive homes abroad (*Korea Week*, 1975:4). A great majority of these children were placed in American homes.

Like other nationalities, Koreans in the economically active and biologically reproductive ages are overrepresented among immigrants to the United States. In particular, persons between ages 20 and 39 constituted 49.4 percent of the Korean immigrants admitted during 1973 and 44.0 percent in 1977. In comparison, the corresponding percentages for all immigrant groups were 46.4 percent in 1973 and 44.7 percent in 1977. On the other hand, elderly persons are extremely underrepresented among the Korean immigrants. Koreans 50 or more years old constituted only 3 percent of those admitted during 1970, 7 percent during 1973, and 7 percent in 1977. For all immigrants admitted, the proportions were 14.7 percent during 1973 and 9.6 percent during 1977. Whereas persons in the 50 and over age group constituted 25.6 percent of the U.S. population in 1976, they made up only 12 percent of the Korean population in Korea in 1975, owing to Korea's young age structure.

California and New York are the two most favored states of destination for immigrants, including the Koreans. In 1973, 22 percent of the Korean immigrants intended to settle in California, and 11 percent intended to settle in New York. In 1977, California's share increased to 24 percent and New York's decreased to 8 percent. New York

accepted 23 percent of all immigrants during 1973 and 19 percent during 1977. California drew 21 percent of all immigrants in 1973 and also in 1977. In other words, about one-third of immigrating Koreans settled in California and New York (with about 3 to 1 favoring California) and about 40 percent of all immigrants settled in the two states (with each receiving about the same number).

Koreans tend to disperse over wider geographic areas than other immigrant groups do. The immigration statistics for 1977 indicate that about 65 percent of all U.S. immigrants settle in five states: 21 percent in California, 19 percent in New York, 12 percent in Florida, 7 percent in New Jersey, and 5 percent in Illinois. In contrast, the proportion of Korean immigrants in the five largest states of destination in 1977 was less than 50 percent (24 percent in California, 8 percent in New York, 7 percent in Illinois, 5 percent in Hawaii, and 4 percent in Texas).

Contrary to the prevailing notion, the percentages of Korean immigrants settling in major cities are relatively small when compared with those of other immigrant groups. Four cities, however, do seem to draw a substantial proportion of the Korean immigrants. In 1977, they attracted about 20 percent of the Korean immigrants admitted that year: Los Angeles, 7 percent; New York, 6 percent; Chicago, 4 percent; and Honolulu, 3 percent. This pattern is noticeably different from that of other immigrants. For the same year, New York City alone drew 17 percent of the total immigrants. It was followed by Miami, 8 percent; Los Angeles, 5 percent; and Chicago, 3 percent. These four cities thus drew 33 percent of the total immigrants admitted.

Within cities, Korean newcomers tend to concentrate in areas of racial transition. For example, in Los Angeles, about 36 percent of the county's Koreans are concentrated in an area composed of six zip (postal) codes. This area was almost exclusively occupied by working-class whites until the mid-1960s, but has since been divided into racially mixed neighborhoods composed of Blacks, Chicanos, Southeast Asians, working-class whites, and Koreans. For incoming Korean immigrants, the area appears to serve as a launching station; most who settle there tend not to remain for very long. A telephone directory analysis indicates that about 89 percent of the Koreans living there in 1972 had left the area by 1977 (Yu, 1979a).

The pattern of Korean immigration with respect to preference categories has changed noticeably over the years. During the 1966-68

period, persons admitted under the occupational preference categories (the third and the sixth preferences with their spouses and children) constituted 73 percent of the total Korean immigrants. But they comprised only 25 percent during 1969–72, 12 percent in 1973, and 9 percent in 1977. About 91 percent of Koreans admitted in 1977 were either relatives of U.S. citizens or permanent residents; those who were admitted under the third, sixth, and nonpreference categories comprised only 4 percent (Table 3). Currently, the majority of Korean immigrants are close relatives of Koreans who already reside in the United States.

Koreans are one of the most highly educated ethnic groups in the United States. According to 1970 U.S. Census data, the percentages of persons 25 years of age and over who had completed at least four years of college were: Koreans, 36.3; Chinese, 25.6; Filipinos, 22.5; Japanese, 15.9; Whites, 11.6; and Blacks, 4.5. Subsequent surveys have also documented the high educational level of Koreans. The 1973 Asian-American Field Study conducted in the Korea Town area of Los Angeles reported that 61 percent of the 358 sampled Koreans 25 years of age and over had completed at least four years of college (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1974). A 1978 telephone survey in Los Angeles indicated that 71.1 percent of the Korean household heads and 64.7 percent of their spouses had completed at least four years of college (Yu, 1979b). This same survey also revealed that 10 percent of the Korean household heads and 3 percent of their spouses held an M.A., M.S., or a Ph.D. degree. A 1978 survey of 116 Korean blue-collar workers in Chicago indicated that 40 percent of the female and 58 percent of the male respondents had completed their college education prior to immigration to the United States (Hurh and Kim, 1979). A nationwide mail survey of Koreans in the United States conducted in the summer of 1979 found that 66.5 percent of the respondents had received a college education (*Joong-Ang Daily News*, 1979).

The majority of recent Korean immigrants came from backgrounds of relatively high occupational status. Among those who came in 1970 and who reported their previous occupations before immigration, 68 percent had held professional and technical jobs in the Republic of Korea. The overall occupational level of the Korean immigrants has declined noticeably in more recent years; professional and technical workers comprised 50 percent of the Korean workers admitted in

1973, 40 percent in 1976, and 35 percent in 1977. But still a substantially higher proportion of Korean immigrants have backgrounds of high occupational status than do other immigrants (Table 4). Although the proportion of Korean workers in the professional category has declined, the share in clerical and operative categories has increased substantially. Among the Korean workers admitted in 1973, clerical workers constituted 6 percent and operatives 4 percent. These percentages increased to 12 and 16 respectively in 1977. This downward trend in occupational ranking is expected to continue, as the relatives of the Koreans already in the United States remain the predominant source of immigration.

TABLE 4 Percentage distribution of Korean and total immigrants admitted to the United States, by occupation: fiscal years 1973 and 1977

Occupation	1973		1977	
	Korean	Total	Korean	Total
Professional, technical, and kindred	49.5	26.3	35.2	23.8
Managers and administrators	15.1	5.9	14.4	9.2
Sales	1.1	1.7	3.1	3.0
Clerical	6.1	8.4	12.1	10.7
Crafts	12.9	12.2	11.7	11.3
Operatives	4.3	13.6	12.6	18.3
Laborers	1.0	11.7	1.5	6.5
Farmers	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.3
Farm laborers	1.4	4.0	2.6	3.6
Service	6.4	10.5	6.0	8.9
Private household service	2.1	5.6	0.6	4.5
All occupations reported	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Number)	(5,879)	(156,477)	(7,881)	(189,378)

SOURCE: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1974 and 1978: table 8).

MOTIVES FOR IMMIGRATION AND ECONOMIC ADAPTATION

A basic question in any migration study is why people choose to uproot themselves from a familiar place and move to a strange and often unwelcome place. Data addressing this question regarding Koreans are scanty and unsystematic. Furthermore, even the available data are concerned mainly with only the expressed reasons for emigration or

immigration. When we examine the reasons for migration, however, it is necessary initially to distinguish between the *surface* reasons that are perceived and articulated by the individuals, and the *structural* reasons that are at the root of the surface reasons; the latter are not necessarily perceived by the individuals. Later in this paper we will address this latter concern. For the present, we will examine data dealing with the dominant motives offered by Korean emigrants.

One structured survey conducted in the Republic of Korea in 1978 with 510 prospective emigrants who were in the process of emigration at the time revealed that three reasons for emigration were most frequently mentioned: (1) economic reasons, (2) educational opportunities for children, and (3) family union (Hong and Kim, 1979). The three reasons were mentioned with more or less equal frequencies. Another study conducted in the United States with 152 Korean businessmen in the Los Angeles area (Bonacich and Light, 1981) confirmed that economic reasons (e.g., "for a better life") were by far the most frequently mentioned (by about 42 percent), whereas the next in frequency of mention was a concern for children's education (20 percent), political reasons—lack of human rights, fear of another war, etc.—(13 percent), and family reunion (12 percent). A study in Chicago also stressed educational reasons as well as economic reasons (Kim and Condon, 1975). Judging from these data and our own personal observations, it seems clear that Korean immigration to the United States is predominantly a social mobility-oriented movement.

How successful have Koreans been in achieving their goal in the "land of opportunities"? This is a difficult question to answer, primarily because social mobility is not simply a matter of moving up or down a single occupational hierarchy. Before attempting to answer the question, it is essential to examine the occupational activities of Korean immigrants. Two patterns stand out. One is that Korean immigrants work very hard; the other is that many work in small businesses.

That Korean immigrants work hard is evidenced by their high labor force participation rate and the large number of hours they work per day. Yu's 1978 telephone survey of 180 Koreans in Los Angeles revealed that 98 percent of the Korean household heads and 63 percent of their spouses were employed full-time (Yu, 1979b). This survey also indicated that almost a half of the respondents worked more than nine hours a day, about 20 percent worked more than 10 hours, and about 25 percent worked during the evening and night hours. Nearly half of them worked on the weekends.

The same survey disclosed that 40 percent of household heads and 36 percent of their spouses in Los Angeles were proprietors of some type of small business. Using a different method (counting the number of Korean-owned enterprises in Los Angeles County and dividing it by the number of Korean households), Bonacich et al. (1980) estimated that about one quarter of all Korean households in the Los Angeles area were in business for themselves. Why do so many Koreans move into small business, especially when the economy appears to be moving in the opposite direction? Bonacich et al. offer three major "immediate reasons": (1) the lack of alternative occupational choices; (2) the desire to obtain high income levels (it guarantees work opportunities for all able members of the family and enables them to work overtime in the evenings and on weekends); and (3) that investment in a small business was used by many Koreans as a means to obtain permanent resident visas. By and large, many Korean immigrants view small entrepreneurship as a major avenue of social mobility, especially when upward mobility is blocked in the organized sector. It is noteworthy, as Bonacich et al. (1980:179) observed, that Koreans "have bought the 'American dream' while, paradoxically, most Americans have given up on it."

The specific types of small business that Koreans enter tend to be of the trade and services varieties. They are most likely to be hamburger shops, corner grocery or fruit and vegetable stores, wig shops, liquor stores, gas stations, shoe repair shops, and the like. Recently some Korean garment factories have emerged, but the majority of Korean businesses are still small. A 1972 Census Bureau study of business activities in the United States found that of the 1,201 Korean businesses recorded (obviously an undercount), only 21 percent had any paid employees, 61 percent had one to four employees, and about 19 percent had more than five workers. It is evident that Korean businesses are characterized by labor-intensive activities with low capital investment.

Another important feature of Korean businesses is that they tend to be located in the downtown or business districts, particularly in the Black ghettos, Spanish-speaking barrios, and racially mixed zones of the city. In this sense, Koreans seem to perform the role of "middle-man minority," filling the gaps left by monopoly capital (Bonacich et al., 1980). This last point suggests some larger structural reasons as to why there are so many Korean (and other Asian minority) small businesses in the United States.

As Bonacich et al. have observed, "Entrepreneurship is not something they [Korean immigrants] fall into 'naturally' or out of habit, but must be acquired on arrival" (1980:174). They argue that two aspects of monopoly capitalism are responsible for pushing Koreans into small business. One is that large corporations, given their emphasis on efficiency and profitability, leave gaps in the economy. For example, the ghettos and barrios, with their attendant high crime rates and credit problems, may be deserted by the corporations for more profitable locations, thus leaving the poorer areas to those immigrants who are willing to accept the reduced profit margins and higher crime risk. Another factor is that the immigrants themselves create small business niches that monopoly capital finds exploitable. This situation seems to apply to the garment industry subcontracting and maintenance companies—situations in which Korean entrepreneurs often help the corporations to exploit cheap immigrant labor.

At this point, we can broaden our focus a bit by examining the entire occupational distribution exhibited by Korean immigrants. The data from Yu's 1978 Los Angeles sample survey (1979b), presented in Table 5, indicate that for household heads the largest category next to proprietors (who constituted 40 percent) was professionals (25 percent). Manual workers (both skilled and unskilled) comprised about 25 percent of the household heads. This occupational distribution represents remarkable downward mobility compared with the

TABLE 5 Percentage distribution of Korean household heads and their spouses, by occupation: Los Angeles and Orange Counties, 1978

Occupation	Heads		Spouses	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Professional	38	24.8	12	12.4
Proprietor	61	39.9	33	34.0
Clerical	15	9.8	13	13.4
Skilled worker	19	12.4	5	5.2
Unskilled labor	20	13.1	33	34.0
Sewing	0	0.0	21	21.6
Other	20	13.1	13	13.4
All occupations	153	100.0	97	100.0

SOURCE: Yu (1979b).

distribution of the immigrants' occupations held in Korea. Of those who had held jobs there, approximately 58 percent had worked in professional occupations, whereas only 8 percent had been employed in manual occupations.

Examining the immigrants' occupational mobility pattern more closely, we see that the predominant pattern involves professional men who become small businessmen. According to Yu's 1978 Los Angeles study, about one-third of Korean men who experienced occupational mobility conformed to this pattern. The mobility pattern among Korean women, however, was noticeably different. In Los Angeles, the largest category of women comprised those employed in semi- or unskilled jobs, primarily as sewing workers in small garment factories. Another large category was in small business (34 percent). By contrast, over three-quarters of the immigrant women who had held jobs in Korea were either professional or clerical workers and none of them was an unskilled manual laborer. More than half of those women doing sewing work in Los Angeles had not held jobs in Korea (Yu, 1979b).

The general situation for Korean immigrant women in the United States is that they now have to work and thus contribute to the family income, and the most likely options open to them appear to be jobs in the local garment sweat shops or helping their husbands to operate small shops. It is perhaps remarkable that more than half of Korean working women work on weekends, and more than three-quarters of them do so while looking after their dependent children.

The occupational patterns described above, however, refer mainly to recent immigrants, as more than half of the 1978 Los Angeles sample had resided for less than four years in the United States. There are indications that after a short period of downward mobility, many Korean immigrants move up the occupational ladder by starting a business of their own. Some may obtain a professional license or credential. Among the Koreans who became naturalized U.S. citizens, 36 percent of those who worked were professional and managerial workers in 1970; the corresponding figure in 1977 was 54 percent (see Table 6).

Job satisfaction may be another important indicator of economic adjustment. The 1978 Los Angeles study showed that workers' satisfaction with their work is closely related to their educational levels, occupational standing, and the length of stay in the United States. As can be expected, job dissatisfaction is strong among those who have

TABLE 6 Percentage distribution of Korean and total employed persons naturalized as U.S. citizens, by occupation: fiscal years 1973 and 1977

Occupation	1973		1977	
	Korean	Total	Korean	Total
Professional, technical, and kindred	42.2	22.6	42.5	26.3
Managers and administrators	6.8	7.2	11.8	8.6
Sales	2.1	4.2	2.3	3.7
Clerical	10.4	14.4	7.0	14.4
Crafts	3.0	12.1	13.1	14.1
Operatives	11.3	15.1	9.9	14.6
Laborers	2.4	5.4	2.2	4.5
Farmers	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Farm laborers	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.4
Service	20.9	17.2	10.7	12.5
Private household workers	0.8	1.2	0.3	0.8
All occupations reported	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Number)	(1,190)	(76,246)	(4,862)	(101,462)

SOURCE: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1974 and 1978: table 40).

recently arrived and are still in the process of adjusting. The degree of job satisfaction appears to improve as individuals move into the profession they have prepared for, or as they begin a business of their own.

THE WORLD ECONOMIC SYSTEM APPROACH

It may be true that all voluntary migration represents the desire of an individual to obtain a better life. But migration is not simply an individual matter. Behind each individually determined movement there always exist some deeper structural conditions that influence the size and the pattern of the whole migratory stream; these, in turn, exert a definite influence on both the sending and the receiving societies. Most studies of migration have been concerned with individuals' motivations and their adaptations and have thus neglected to give adequate attention to these broader, structural questions. This neglect appears to be due largely to the earlier theoretical orientation, which viewed migration primarily as an individualistically-motivated phenomenon that arises when there is need to restore equilibrium between

spatial units. According to that view, the resultant migration decreases the population pressure in low-growth areas and provides for the labor needs of the growing regions, thus helping to restore balance between human and capital resources. But recently there has emerged a new theoretical approach, the world economic system perspective, which draws attention to the broader structural factors that influence international migration. In this section we first briefly review the major theses of this new approach and subsequently examine several issues related to Korean immigration to the United States that are suggested by the approach.

The world economic system perspective proposes a clean break with the equilibrium theory of migration. The basic assumption of the perspective is that contemporary international labor migration is caused by the imperatives of capitalism, which is organized on a global scale for worldwide capital accumulation. It is important, therefore, not to put too much weight on individual motivations to migrate, or even on the "push" or "pull" factors operating in the country of origin or country of destination. Instead, primary attention must be given to the logic and the rhythms of the current phase of monopoly capitalism. It is generally recognized that contemporary international migration is basically labor migration, with its dominant direction from peripheral to core industrialized countries.

Theorists who subscribe to some version of this theoretical framework believe that to gain a full understanding of the causes and nature of international labor migration, one must place this movement in the context of the world economic system. They offer two lines of explanation.

The first explanation emphasizes the so-called "development of underdevelopment" process, which is caused in peripheral countries by the penetration of the core, metropolitan capital (Frank, 1967). The resultant processes of surplus extraction, "uneven development" between regions and sectors, "structural dislocations" or "displacement" of surplus labor, and increasing inequality of income and underemployment problems are all believed to be the major factors leading to emigration. In this regard, internal and international migration are intimately related processes and perhaps may not need to be distinguished, as they are influenced by the same externally induced uneven development (Portes, 1978). Noting that emigration/immigration is simply a product of the uneven development inherent in the capitalist

mode of production, Castells (1975:36) points out, as major reasons of permanent emigration, such factors as "decomposition of backward productive structures—especially in agriculture; structural unemployment in certain sectors; and the much higher nominal and real wages available in the advanced capitalist countries." Similarly, Portes (1978: 11) argues:

Sustained labor migration requires the penetration of the political and economic institutions of the dominant society into the subordinate one. This penetration creates imbalances between sectors and institutions of the subordinate society that lead eventually to labor displacement. Imbalances are first induced from the outside but in time become internal to the structure of the weaker societies. These internal imbalances, not invidious comparisons with the wealth of more developed regions, are what underlie sustained processes of labor migration.

Whereas the first explanation for placing migration within the context of the world economic system is concerned with structural causes of emigration from peripheral countries, the second focuses on the economic processes in the receiving countries having advanced capitalist economies. The world economic system theorists argue that the main reason why such countries accept immigrant labor is their need for capital to counter the basic tendency for the rate of profit to fall. Bonacich (1981:63) makes this point most succinctly:

... labor immigration grows out of the logic of capitalist development, which creates a tendency for the profit rate to fall and a cyclical tendency toward crises, and an effort to solve these problems by seeking to increase the rate of exploitation by absorbing new, and cheaper, sources of labor-power.

Immigrant labor alleviates the crises of the current phase of monopoly capitalism in several ways. First, immigrant workers, willing to work for lower pay at longer hours and under worse conditions than native workers, provide a competitive element in the labor market that prevents the indigenous workers from continuing to accelerate their pay and benefit demands. Second, migrant workers—most of whom are of prime working ages, have few dependents, and have been nourished and educated in their home countries—help capitalists achieve tremendous reductions of the "social cost" of production. Magnifying this cost reduction is the selective nature of migration, for migrants are typically the better educated and more vigorous segment of the sending society (Petras, 1980). Third, immigrant labor plays an important role as a regulator of capitalist crises. Castells (1975:55) argues that "immigrant workers are one of the basic elements

preventing recessions from turning into crises." In a sense, then, immigrant workers fulfill the role of the "ideal worker-consumer": They are very productive in the expansionary phase of a capitalist economy; they are excludable in the recessionary phase; and they consume little (Castells, 1975). Similarly, Petras (1980:444) observes that immigrant workers "play a unique role in helping maintain an equilibrium for capital during periods of economic fluctuation."

Several other propositions are suggested by the world economic system perspective, but for the present purpose it may be sufficient to keep these basic points in mind and turn to the case at hand. Here we are concerned mainly with three aspects of Korean migration to the United States: (1) the processes in the Republic of Korea that lead to emigration, (2) the effects of emigration on Korean society and economy, and (3) the role of Korean immigrants in the American economy. At the outset, it is important to emphasize that Korean migration to the United States is characterized by labor migration, as evidenced by the predominance of working-age immigrants who are economically motivated and who seek jobs as soon as they arrive in the United States. Therefore, the world economic system perspective should be applicable to the Korean-U.S. migration process.

Structural causes of Korean emigration

In considering structural causes of emigration from peripheral to core countries, we have seen that the world economic system perspective stresses the economic effects of the penetration of the metropolitan capital into the peripheral economy. Actually, there is a great deal of fuzziness in many of the world economic system arguments relating to this point; but the main line of reasoning is that this external penetration leads to uneven development between sectors and regions, and the uneven development, in turn, leads to growing economic inequality and structural unemployment and underemployment. According to the theory, these processes would in time facilitate the displacement of a large labor force and the displaced labor would constitute the source of cheap labor to be exported. These arguments are thus quite consistent with Frank's (1967) thesis of "development of underdevelopment," which he views as an almost inevitable consequence of external economic dependence.

The Korean case, however, raises many difficulties for such an argument. Prior to 1979, the Korean economy, although highly dependent

upon the two metropolitan economies of the United States and Japan, achieved remarkable economic growth. There certainly were problems of sectoral and regional disparity in growth rates, but the level of unemployment or underemployment was noticeably reduced, and along with this progress absolute poverty was almost eliminated. Nevertheless, we do not believe that Korea's economic progress has reduced the number of actual or potential emigrants. Furthermore, those who emigrated were, by and large, not the persons who were structurally replaced or the victims of growing economic inequality. On the contrary, they were people who had tended to benefit from the dependent nature of the country's economic growth.

Yet, we do not believe that the Korean experience necessarily disproves the validity of the world economic system perspective, except perhaps its overly economic interpretations. We must realize that the effect of foreign economic penetration into peripheral societies is not restricted to the economic realm but extends to political, social, and cultural institutions. The process occurring within the wide nexus of social institutions and cultural life may be labeled as "structural imbalancing" or "peripheralization." Among the world economic system theorists of migration, Portes (1978) has shown a particular sensitivity to this process. Specifically, he cites two forms of "externally induced structural imbalances" in peripheral societies. One is the articulation of peripheral institutions with those of the center. The emigration of professional workers illustrates this process.

Professional emigration is basically a consequence of the reproduction of the technical training apparatus of advanced nations in underdeveloped ones. Implanted institutions come to function more in accordance with needs and requirements of the advanced societies than those of the country that receives them (Portes, 1978:18).

In fact, it is not just professional training programs but also the whole educational system and many other institutional practices in the Republic of Korea that have been more or less implanted by American influence since 1945. Given such structural imbalances, the more closely Korea follows the American model of development, the more people there will be whose skills and aspirations cannot be absorbed in Korean society.

The other related form of imbalance or peripheralization touches on the cultural realm. It is widely accepted that peripheral societies have absorbed an increasingly modern culture and the cult of advanced

consumption, while denying the mass of their populations the means to participate in it. Portes (1979:433) observes that "the mass media have made sure that the attractions of modern consumerism reach the most remote corners of the country" but that underdevelopment and a highly unequal distribution deny access to these goods to the majority of the population. This situation, as he suggests, may be labeled as the syndrome of "modernity-in-underdevelopment." Migration to the center country where this "modernity" originated is, therefore, one way for individuals to resolve this contradiction.

Attention to structural imbalance in the society and culture of a peripheral country greatly improves our understanding of emigration. But still there is a crucial dimension of imbalance that is missing; it is the political situation that is created by dependence on a powerful foreign country. And this is particularly important for countries like Korea. As Skocpol argues in her critique of Wallerstein (1974), the current theorizing within the world economic system approach tends to make a two-step reduction: "first, a reduction of socio-economic structure to determination by world market opportunities and technological production possibilities; and second, a reduction of state structures and policies to determination by dominant class interests" (1977: 1079). The world economic system theorists tend to undervalue the significance of incessant politico-military competitions among nations and the specific geopolitical situation of each country as independent factors influencing countries' economic and social development patterns. The Republic of Korea experienced a tragic war 30 years ago and is still under the constant threat of another war. How much of the internal political, social, and even intellectual processes are determined by this experience, and how much of hidden but persistent psychological insecurity is created by it, are difficult to appreciate by those outside the system. Yet, the Korean hostilities were initially created by the major forces in the world system, even though the world system we speak of here is not just the capitalistic economic system but also the politico-military system in which big powers compete with one another for political hegemony. In the absence of relevant data, we suspect that the political insecurity created in the Republic of Korea by such external forces may be one of the most important underlying reasons for Korean emigration. Certainly, political factors have loomed as the most important causes of immigration to the United States from Vietnam and Cuba in recent years, and they will probably play the

most important role in accelerating immigration from many politically troubled Asian countries in the near future. It would appear, then, that the structural pressures for emigration in the Republic of Korea do not reside only in economic conditions but include and may even be dominated by political instability and structural imbalances that are the result of that country's integration into the world system.

Implications of Korean emigration for Korea

As far as we know, the Korean government has not established any well-planned official policy on emigration, but it has been concerned mainly with three things: reduction of population pressure, obstruction of any large-scale capital flight, and prevention of any negative effects on social and political stability. Unfortunately, data that might be used to assess the success of this strategy are scarce and those that are available pertain mainly to demographic aspects. One recent study sponsored by the Korea Development Institute in Seoul (Hong and Kim, 1979) estimated the total number of Korean emigrants between 1962 and 1977 to be 317,746, of whom 76 percent went to the United States. This number constitutes slightly less than 1 percent of the total population of the Republic of Korea. But the long-term demographic effects of emigration should be greater than these data indicate, because a high proportion of the emigrant group consisted of women of reproductive age.

When people leave their places of origin, they do not simply reduce the number of human bodies to be fed. They also take other things with them. On the part of the less developed countries, a serious problem associated with emigration is the loss of human capital, the so-called "brain drain." Indeed, the brain drain problem is quite serious in Korea. We have already noted that the current U.S. immigration policy favors immigration of skilled workers and professionals and that the largest category of Korean immigrants are those who have received professional training in Korea. The proportion of the college-educated among the emigrants is about eight times higher than its counterpart among the total Korean population. According to Hong and Kim's estimate, the Republic of Korea has lost about 2.6 million years of schooling by virtue of the emigration that took place between 1962 and 1977. They further estimate that the total government expenditure for the schooling of those who left the country during the 1962-77 period was around 220 billion won at their 1976 value (about

458 million 1976 U.S. dollars); to this figure we must add the educational cost to their parents, which totaled about 146 billion *won* (about \$304 million) in the same period. The total figure is equivalent to about 2.6 percent of the gross national product in 1977, undoubtedly a tremendous loss for a developing country. There is a growing awareness among researchers of international migration that labor migration from the less developed to the more developed countries is often accompanied by what is sometimes called "reverse foreign aid" given by poor countries to the rich. Newland (1979) estimated that the value of skilled emigrants to the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada alone was around \$46 billion during the period from 1961 to 1972. Presumably, Korea's contribution to this interesting form of development subsidy has been substantial.

So far, the Korean government has not been as sensitive to the brain drain as it has been to the "capital flight" problem. Korean emigration law specifies that emigrants may only take the equivalent of \$2,000 per adult and \$1,000 per child with them. Legally, there are no other ways to transfer one's property to the country of destination beyond this allowed amount. The Korean government has also restricted emigration of top-level businessmen and high-ranking government officials. There is, however, a widespread belief among Koreans in both the United States and Korea that many Koreans bring a large amount of money to the United States. That capital flight becomes a sensitive issue whenever there is political turmoil in Korea suggests the seriousness of this problem.

The flow of skills and capital is certainly not unidirectional. There is no doubt that recent economic development in the Republic of Korea owes a great deal to educated Americans. We find Koreans with American Ph.D.s in many Korean educational and research institutions, and they are particularly visible among technocrats who have engineered Korean economic development in the past two decades. Because it is plausible that a large proportion of them received some kind of financial assistance from the U.S. government while they were studying in the United States, the assistance can be regarded as U.S. investment in Korean human capital which moved back to Korea. It must be noted, however, that only a small proportion of U.S.-educated Koreans have returned to Korea and, once back in Korea, they have generally contributed to the maintenance of close relations between the two countries. In several ways, then, this kind of U.S. training of

Korean workers furthers the structural imbalances we commented on earlier. But it is impossible to calculate any exact net balance in this two-way flow of human capital between the two countries.

Even if Koreans have to smuggle their money out of Korea, they can send money freely to Korea. According to Korean official statistics reported in Hong and Kim (1979), the amount of remittances from Koreans abroad totaled \$1,124 million between 1970 and 1978, of which \$757 million originated from the United States. In 1977 remittances from Korean emigrants constituted about 0.4 percent of Korea's GNP. The actual amount of money sent to Korea is probably greater, because this figure does not include the flow (both in cash and goods) that occurs outside the formal banking institutions.

In addition to these tangible capital gains through remittances, the Korean economy has benefitted from Korean businesses in the United States that merchandize such Korean products as wigs, clothes, and plastic items. There has always been a close connection between Korean manufacturing activities at home and the immigrants' businesses in the United States. Development of synthetic hairs and the booming garment industry in Korea have assisted Korean immigrants' economic adaptation tremendously, while Korea in turn has benefited much in penetrating the U.S. consumer market.

The role of Korean immigrants in the U.S. economy

As we saw earlier, the world economic system perspective suggests that the main reason why metropolitan capital is willing to accept the immigrant labor is that such labor is cheaper than indigenous labor and not "corrupted" by the national labor movement. World economic system theorists argue, moreover, that the state colludes with capitalists in keeping the immigrant worker's politico-legal status vulnerable and thus economically exploitable. In addition, most economists agree that "monopoly and competitive sector firms are in a somewhat different position in regards to both their immediate need for cheap labor-power and their ability to make use of it" (Bonacich, 1981:47). Generally, competitive-sector firms score higher on both (see also Castells, 1975; Petras, 1980).

The extent to which Korean immigrant workers perform cheap labor in the United States is less clear than is the case of the Mexican illegal migrant workers in the United States or the guest workers in Great Britain and Germany. On the one hand, there is much evidence

that Korean immigrants tend to undersell their skills. The college-educated immigrants in semi-skilled manual jobs and exprofessional workers who work as small-scale proprietors, as well as highly educated women in low-paying garment industry jobs, indicate the existence of cheap-labor problems. Other employed Korean workers are by and large concentrated in what is called the "secondary labor market," a market where jobs are fairly unstable and unprotected by unions and where there is no well-defined career mobility ladder. Furthermore, within this general secondary labor market, Korean workers tend to be concentrated in the less desired geographic areas. We noted above that most Korean shops are located in the relatively poor and crime-ridden sections of U.S. cities. Even many Korean physicians and other professional workers tend to work in less popular areas offering fewer rewards. On the other hand, it is difficult to see an association between the dominant economic activities of Korean immigrants and exploitative relationships with capital, large or small. In fact, one of the most interesting features of Korean economic adaptation in the United States is Koreans' avoidance of exploitative labor relations through their ownership of small, independent businesses.

The extent and mechanisms by which ethnic small businesses serve the interests of large capital are not entirely clear. Of course, there are some business activities like contracted garment production or maintenance services where the immigrant small entrepreneurs ("the middlemen minority," in Bonacich's terms) serve the interests of monopoly capital by organizing and controlling their own ethnic labor force. But that is not the case with corner grocery stores, restaurants, clothing stores, and the like where the majority of Korean small businessmen are found. Nor does monopoly capital appear to profit from many professionals who work in less desirable locations.

It seems useful to expand our attention from the narrow interests of capital to the broad interests of professional organizations and consumers whom Korean immigrant workers may serve. It can be argued, for example, that the large number of Korean and other Asian physicians in the United States has served the interests of the American Medical Association (AMA). Rather than establishing more medical schools in the United States, the AMA seems to have preferred bringing in foreign M.D.s, in order to maintain flexibility in its professional labor market, because the flow of foreign trained M.D.s can be cut off at any time. Furthermore, foreign physicians perform an important

social function by providing their services to people who live in small towns or in the poor sections of large cities—i.e., to the consumers who are by and large deserted by the native professionals. The latter function is quite similar to the role of Korean small businessmen who serve the racial minority customers in the downtown areas of many U.S. cities. Therefore, we are inclined to view Korean immigrants' contribution to monopoly capitalism as an indirect one—through filling the gaps left by monopoly capital and providing flexibility to some professional labor markets rather than directly providing an exploited labor force. The latter function is performed more frequently by immigrants from other less developed countries.

In many ways, Korean immigrants fit the description of Castells's (1975) "ideal worker-consumer"; they are very productive, they consume little, and they make few demands on the state. The majority of them have been highly educated in their own country and have brought with them a strong competitive spirit to this society. Their contribution to the U.S. economy will continue to be substantial, particularly in filling the cracks in this aging monopoly capitalism.

CONCLUSION

What has been presented above is a somewhat eclectic approach to Korean immigration to the United States. Our purpose was not to develop any theoretical proposition or to test any hypotheses concerning such immigration. Rather, we were interested in identifying the major aspects of recent Korean immigration to the United States and thereafter examining its structural causes and implications. For this latter purpose, we considered the world economic system approach in the light of the Korean experience, particularly because there is much to be gained by placing international migration within the context of the world capitalist system. At the very minimum, many important questions are raised by this approach to the analysis of emigration and immigration—questions that have remained relatively unaddressed; these lead us to an examination of some deeper structural factors that may influence this process. We acknowledge, however, that larger structural reasons do not necessarily subsume individualistic reasons for migration. Although the latter may be shaped and constrained by the former, each set of factors may produce its own influence on an individual's behavior. We believe, therefore, that both the older individualistic approach and the newer world system approach are useful for improving our knowledge of international migration.

At the individual level, it seems that the most important characteristic of Korean immigration to this country is the immigrants' strong motivation toward upward social mobility. Voluntary migration anywhere is undoubtedly motivated by the desire to improve one's life; this seems to be particularly the case among Korean immigrants to the United States. And, as noted above, the majority of Koreans migrating to this country are well-educated and have come from high-status occupations. Most of them are not the victims of peripheral economic development but, rather, likely to be the beneficiaries of this process. They are more likely than nonmigrants to have been part of the modernized sector of the Korean society. When asked why they came to the United States, the majority offered reasons related to social mobility (e.g., better economic opportunities for themselves, or better education for their children).

Of course, not all who possess the same aspirations can expect to migrate to the United States. Recent Korean immigrants, like immigrants from other countries, are more likely than earlier immigrants to have had relatives already in the United States. That is, social networks between the two countries operate as the most important channel, as well as a facilitating factor, for Korean immigration to the United States. It will be interesting to see how this changing pattern of immigration will affect the ways in which Korean immigrants adapt to American society.

Why many Koreans seek to improve their lot in the United States seems at first glance to require a simple answer. The United States is a much richer country than the Republic of Korea; Korea also possesses more limited material resources and a high population density even in rural areas. This answer, however, is too simple. For international migration is caused not simply by comparison of the living standard in one's own society with that in another but also by the articulation of the two economic and social structures. Labor migration is not likely to occur between two societies that are not connected in some way within the larger economic system, no matter how much economic disparity may exist between them. Moreover, poorer economic conditions in the sending country are likely to be systematically related to better conditions in the receiving country. In some cases, people's aspirations that cannot be satisfied in their own society are direct consequences of some powerful foreign influences. For such reasons as these, it becomes important to examine international migration from the world system perspective.

Since World War II, the Republic of Korea has been deeply integrated into the world capitalist system dominated by the United States. What characterizes the "special friendship" between Korea and the United States, however, is not so much economic in nature as it is political and military. The Republic of Korea has acted as a frontier of the U.S. world political system's efforts to block Soviet and Chinese expansion in the Far East. It was the competition of the big powers that divided Korea into two parts, brought about a tragic war in 1950, and produced military confrontations and authoritarian regimes in both Koreas. The political and economic development of the Republic of Korea must, therefore, be understood in the larger framework of the world politico-military system which involves both capitalist and communist societies rather than just within the capitalist world system. Political conditions in the Republic of Korea (e.g., the threat of another war, authoritarian rule, political instability) must be regarded as an important underlying cause of emigration. On the part of the United States, too, political and diplomatic considerations may assume priority over the economic one (i.e., the need for cheap labor) in the acceptance of thousands of Koreans each year.

In the U.S. economy, Korean immigrants do provide cheaper labor. But what seems to characterize their economic activities is not so much how they are exploited but the way in which they try to evade such exploitation through small independent entrepreneurship. They seem to use this method because of their strong mobility orientations and, probably more importantly, because they have come from a country where, as in the United States, aggressive commercial capitalism and the value of education have a long history.

It seems that the role of immigrant labor in the advanced economy varies according to the stage and character of the sending economy. The immigrant labor originating from the peripheral economy may be more likely to fill the most arduous and menial positions, whereas the immigrant labor coming from the semi-peripheral economy may be more apt to fill the gaps in the middle rungs of the economic structure in the receiving society. Or, perhaps, it is not just the economic character of the sending country that shapes the pattern of the immigrants' role in the receiving economy; an equally important influence may derive from certain cultural traditions that they bring with them. In order to be more useful, the world economic system theory must pay closer attention to the historical and cultural context of each

sending economy as well as the unique political situation of each country from which the receiving country accepts its immigrant labor force.

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Center programs are conducted by institutes addressing problems of communication, culture learning, environment and policy, population, and resource systems. A limited number of "open" grants are available to degree scholars and research fellows whose academic interests are not encompassed by institute programs.

The U.S. Congress provides basic funding for Center programs and a variety of awards to participants. Because of the cooperative nature of Center programs, financial support and cost-sharing are also provided by Asian and Pacific governments, regional agencies, private enterprise, and foundations. The Center is on land adjacent to and provided by the University of Hawaii.

THE EAST-WEST POPULATION INSTITUTE, established as a unit of the East-West Center in 1969 with the assistance of a grant from the Agency for International Development, carries out multidisciplinary research, training, and related activities in the field of population, placing emphasis on economic, social, psychological, and environmental aspects of population problems in Asia, the Pacific, and the United States.

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